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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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A-149 NO. | CONFIDENTIAL | HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : BANGKOK, CINCPAC ~~(FOR POLAD)~~, DANANG, VIENTIANE

EXCISE

RECEIVED
AUG 29 8 34 AM 1967
AIRGRAM BRANCH

FROM : Amembassy SAIGON DATE: August 22, 1967

SUBJECT : PROVINCIAL REPORTING: Mid-August Election Picture in An Giang

REF :

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

Action Assigned to VN
Action Taken
Date
Officer Signing

The Campaign: In the province capital of Long Xuyen by August 15 many posters and banners for the various Upper House and Presidential slates were in evidence, although "The Government of Nguyen Cao Ky is the Government of the Poor" signs predominated. The local Presidential Campaign Committee includes a representative of every candidate but several appear to be merely pro forma. Interestingly, the representative of the Thieu/Ky slate is a Dr. Bang, a non-Hoa Hao who is a member of the Southern Old Students' Association. According to [redacted] who is also on the Thieu/Ky campaign committee, the rest of the committee members are Hoa Hao. The Thieu/Ky organization also includes the very influential Hoa Hao Chairman of the Provincial Council, Col. Hue. According to [redacted] An Giang Province Chief Lt. Col. Ly Ba Pham "forced" Bang to head the Thieu/Ky committee to keep the support for the GVN slate from appearing an all-Hoa Hao affair. Most influential people in Long Xuyen seem convinced that the Thieu/Ky slate, enjoying the support of most of the Hoa Hao as well as Northern Catholics, will carry the province easily. [redacted] says the joint military ticket will win by 70 to 80 per cent. He also believes that the Hoa Hao leadership dispute between Lt. Col. Tran Van Tuoi and Luong Trung Tuong will not affect the Hoa Hao vote. Both he and [redacted] said they expected Phan Khac Suu to outpull Tran Van Huong in An Giang. This is an estimate of the relative strengths of Suu and Huong not frequently heard in the Delta.

The Hoa Hao: It is clear from the number of influential Hoa Hao in An Giang that the Hoa Hao establishment is firmly if unofficially in the GVN camp. [redacted] and [redacted] a Hoa Hao provincial committee official, all told the reporting officer that there will be a meeting later in August of Hoa Hao officialdom to discuss the coming Central

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REVIEWED BY Dean Spurlock DATE 10/7/81
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Executive Committee (CEC) elections which are apparently still scheduled for mid-September. At this meeting the Hoa Hao leaders may also discuss the national elections and Hoa Hao relationship thereto, but neither Hue [redacted] believe that an official position supporting any presidential candidate will emerge. They believe there will be a kind of general informal agreement (at this point [redacted] put his hands under the table). (Comment: Such a meeting has been rumored for some time and may take place, but there are sufficient uncertainties in current Hoa Hao politics to make this less than certain). b-1 e d

The Opposition: Phan Khac Suu is supported in An Giang by the Hoa Hao Social Democratic Party, although some party members (who are not very numerous in An Giang) will break away to support Thieu and Ky. [redacted] dismissed the Socialist vote by saying it will in any event be split between Suu, Ha Thuc Ky, Huong and Phan Huy Co. (This is one of the few times the reporting officer has heard Co mentioned in the Delta.) Hoa Hao Veterans' Association leader (Hoa Hao) General Lam Thanh Nguyen claims he supports no candidate but he said Thieu and Ky will win "if there is no trouble," i.e., if they stick together. b-1 e d

Tran Van Huong's representative in An Giang is a merchant and newspaperman named Thanh Hai. Working with Thanh Hai is Le Huu Tham, a candidate on the Upper House list of Movement for the Renaissance of the South leader Nguyen Khac Thanh (list number 26). Tham is also supporting associated lists numbers 27 and 28. [redacted] the main difficulty they face in the Huong campaign is that the Hoa Hao leadership in the main supports Thieu and Ky. Although there has been no official order issued to that effect, [redacted] admits that most of the provincial and district Hoa Hao committees support the GVN ticket and many of the Hoa Hao in the countryside will follow their lead. Also, northern Catholics--who constitute the majority of the some 40,000 Catholics in An Giang, including the Bishop of Long Xuyen--also will support Thieu and Ky. Huong's main support, according to [redacted], will come from the remaining southern Catholics, some businessmen, and many of An Giang's "intellectuals" by whom he probably meant schoolteachers and young professional people. [redacted] predicts that Huong will win a majority in the province capital of Long Xuyen but he admits he will be "satisfied" with fifty per cent of the vote in the countryside. That, in the reporting officer's view, is an extremely optimistic estimate.

[redacted] and [redacted] point to the Dong Ha incident to illustrate their thesis that the election will not be conducted fairly. They say, for example, that GVN transportation was used to bring people in to hear Ky speak when he visited Sa Dec recently. [redacted] also charges that "a Hoa Hao member of the Provincial Council" [redacted] has been giving money to former members of

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the An Giang Census Grievance organization to support the Thieu/Ky slate. These CG personnel (who include brother) are also told that they will get their jobs back (CG in An Giang has been disbanded) if Thieu and Ky win. b-1 ed

Supporters of other presidential candidates include a CVT official in Long Xuyen for Ha Thuc Ky. Ha Thuc Ky should get some votes An Giang because he is reportedly supported by a Hoa Hao separatist sect called the Nguyen Long Chau which is supposed to have three to five thousand followers in An Giang. Southern VNQDD candidate Nguyen Hoa Hiep is supported by the party's An Giang representative, a Sino-Vietnamese.

The Catholics: The Secretary of the Bishop of Long Xuyen would not say whom the Bishop supported. He said that the majority of the Catholics in the Diocese are northerners, and about 3/4 of An Giang's 40,000 Catholics are in this category including the Bishop. b-1 ed

The Upper House Contest: According to Upper House slates with the best chance in An Giang are the Three Coconut Lists (Ba Cay Dua). explained, however, that the recently formed All-Vietnam Block (Khoi Toan Viet) which sponsors these three lists is not important in An Giang because "the Hoa Hao do not wish to become identified with a political block". He added that the list headed by La Thanh Nghe (number 2) has a good chance in the province because it has the support of one District Chief (Chau Thanh, which included the town of Long Xuyen) who is a relative of Le Phuoc Sang, a member of Nghe's slate. said, and it is not hard to believe, that any of some 15 Upper House lists with Hoa Hao, or relatives of Hoa Hao, will get some support in Hoa Hao country. He himself supports slate number 17 of Foreign Minister Tran Van Do, he said. Other slates which have better than average change of support in An Giang include number 46, headed by Lt. Col. Le Van Ngiem and number 10 of Hoa Hao Socialist Party leader Pham Ba Cam.

An Giang's outspoken and controversial told the reporting officer that Thieu and Ky can win without using illegal means. When asked if the GVN slate would draw fifty per cent of the An Giang vote, replied "much more that that." has not always been a supporter of the Ky regime and frequently has voiced sudiste sentiments in the past; in fact, he is quick to criticize the Hoa Hao leadership, American policies, and the conduct of the war in general. u

As an example of at least outwardly independent attitude, he criticized the newly formed "Block of Elected Officials" which he characterized as scheme by the Prime Minister to organize newly elected village and hamlet officials on his behalf. said he had received a telegram authorizing the establishment of the "Block" in An Giang from Minister of Security General Linh Quang Vien, but he is not happy at the idea. also said that the Bishop of

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Long Xuyen will certainly support Thieu and Ky and that the various Hoa Hao veterans' groups are on the market and can be bought for the GVN ticket.

Among [ ] complaints is that the Central Election Committees in Saigon have given few instructions to their counterparts in the provinces. Local campaign committees are confused and disorganized. [ ] confused about the coming campaign visit of the presidential candidates to Long Xuyen August 24, and had to ask [ ] more details from the Special Commissariat for Administration. [ ] is also occupied with preparing for a visit from General Thieu on August 26.

However much he may criticize the central government and one or another Hoa Hao faction, [ ] has kept his job which is dependent on maintaining a balance between contending Hoa Hao factions themselves and between the Hoa Hao and Saigon. It is likely that [ ] will not antagonize the GVN or the Hoa Hao by making it unduly difficult in An Giang for the supporters of the Thieu/Ky slate.

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